

## Developing Visual Aids for FFA Promotion in the Classroom

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### Introduction

The FFA (Future Farmers of America) is the largest national youth organization in America (National FFA, 2015). This is in part due to the program's success in recruiting and keeping students involved in the organization. Individual FFA chapters seek to increase membership through recruitment and retention in order to strengthen and diversify the organization, as well as offer students an opportunity to become part of the largest national youth organization and develop their leadership skills. Although members are often recruited simply because they have an interest in agriculture, those who stay with the program often do so because they have found a niche within a specific aspect of the organization (Journal of Agricultural Education, 2015). Students who do not stay with the program are known to leave because they do not find an activity or area of interest in the organization that they can relate to.

Materials in the classroom that clearly display and concisely explain important information about FFA opportunities can give students further insight into the activities and enterprises available. These materials can also convey the benefits of these activities including building specific skills and opportunities to learn more about careers in the agricultural industry.

Additionally, students are more likely to understand and remember information they see and read, rather than what they simply hear. According to a study published by the International Knowledge Sharing Platform, when learning the sense of hearing is used 11 percent while the sense of sight is used 83 percent of the time. This suggests students are significantly more likely to retain and understand information if they see it and hear it.

The purpose of this project is to create visual materials for a classroom that the teacher can use as a supplement for information taught about FFA activities and programs shared with students.

### Methods

The FFA advisor whose chapter would be the beneficiary of the project was consulted to discuss the best subject material for the posters. The paper size, content, and vocabulary of the poster was also discussed, as those aspects of the poster can contribute to and improve student learning (Journal of Education and Practice, 2015). It was decided that one poster would be created for Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects, one for Career and Leadership Development Events (CDEs and LDEs), one for the California FFA State Conference, and one for career opportunities in the agricultural industry. These four posters were developed using an online program called Canva, and then given to the advisor for review. After changes requested by the advisor were made, the posters were submitted to her again for printing and placement in the classroom.

To gain further feedback, the author conducted an anonymous survey of FFA alumni students at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. The following questions were polled:

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very unclear and 10 being very clear, how would you rate the clarity of the information on the posters?
2. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being not at all relatable and 10 being very relatable, how do you think the information on the posters relates to information your FFA advisor shared with you about the FFA?
3. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very poorly designed and 10 being excellently designed, how would you rate the designs of the posters?
4. What aspect of these posters did you like the most?
5. What aspect of these posters could be improved?

### Results

The posters created for the project were beneficial in the classroom and received positive responses from students. The use of visual aids in the classroom increased transparency within the FFA and allowed students to explore different opportunities made available to them by the organization. Specific responses from students showed the average clarity rating to be 8.75/10, the average relatableness rating to be 9/10, and the average design rating to be 8/10 suggesting that they found the materials to be appealing and beneficial. Suggested improvements from the

response sheets included that the information on the SAE poster be made more concise, and that the CDE/LDE poster needed minor design changes in the photos. These improvements to the posters would potentially make them more effective in the classroom, as students are more likely to read the SAE poster in full if it is less text heavy, and fixing the design changes in the CDE/LDE poster will make it more professional. A major factor in the success of these visual aids was their bright colors and professional design, while their greatest need for improvement seemed to be in the area of condensing information.

#### Implications/Recommendations

To improve upon this project, it is recommended those who seek to create their own educational materials for a classroom prioritize communication. Agricultural educators can be extremely busy, and may not be able to reply to electronic communications, such as texts or emails, quickly, which can potentially limit the progress of the project. In order to avoid this issue, it is best to develop a specific plan for each educational material early on, as well as deadlines for when the materials will be submitted to the instructor for review and editing, so that they can plan appropriately.

#### Works Cited

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